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Old pros top the list for music, not noise

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

Ah, lists, lists — they are strictly subjective and reflect the critics' tastes.

In this scribe's ninth consecutive attempt at playing Mr. Armchair Analyst, there are several things that intrigue me about my choices.

The most obvious is that these discs were created by people who have been in the music business for quite a few years (with the exception of the brilliant 22-year-old guitarist Pat Methany).

Most of the artists here are over 30 and are at the peak of their powers. They have tasted success and acceptance before now, but they keep on improving — honorable qualities in the helter-skelter pop market.

They have honed their talents at their own pace and style, and in the face of trends and fads that come and go.

Speaking of trends, there are no 'heavy' or 'cosmic' rock albums here. These genres appeal to particular audiences who are attracted by the sheer visceral nature of the music. Subtlety of expression is not required of groups like Arrowsmith, Styx, Boston, because force is the key: It doesn't matter what you say, it's how loud and speedy you be.

This is not to say that I don't enjoy top-volume music — but music is the key word.

I hear *music* from such groups as the Stones, Fleetwood Mac, and Rod Stewart, all of whom pack a punch in their sound. Stewart is not only a brilliant showman, but as a vocalist he's the poet of rockers (Pagliaro shares the same quality): His vocals play with and cut through the impressive backing sounds.

Such artists offer a lot of interesting and inventive ideas within their high volume, something that cannot be said of some speedy group delivering rehearsed paeans to monotony.

The same can be said about the many acts — Supertramp, Genesis, et al — who are swept away by their electronic virtuosity and the pretensions of their themes. There is something strangely antiseptic about such outfits: Much like the sensitive suffering singer-songwriters, they offer frail truisms surrounded by bombastic orchestrations instead of fragile backings. So much 'heavy' rock is made at the flick of a switch that very little humanity emanates.

The critic's prejudices laid on the line (and there are exceptions to the above rule-of-thumb), I am glad to note the variety of sophisticated sounds being made by our leading popular musicians.

Linda Ronstadt, Emmy Lou Harris and Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood are indicative of the acceptance, finally, of the female voice as a powerful means of expression in rock-pop.

The balladry by Harris on 'Luxury Liner' is as moving and evocative as any, and the way Ronstadt jumps into rock on 'Simple Dreams' is sheer joy. Both employ country music strains to advantage.

Fleetwood Mac is a populist phenomenon: 'Rumors' has spent all of its 43 weeks on the sales charts in the top five. The key to this group is the economy and style of their phrasing and harmony, impeccable without sacrificing soul. The group also brings a welcome adventurous spirit of romanticism to rock.

The Rolling Stones album is one of the best concert records ever made, and a perfect demonstration of the intelligent use of aggression in rock. The Stones slash the message home with much more potency than the punk pretenders.

Levon Helm, drummer of the Band, and his All-Stars (Dr. John, Booker T & the MGs, Paul Butterfield, etc.) have come up with a marvellous good time album — Warm music true to its rhythm 'n' blues roots (from Memphis to New Orleans).

Weather Report is the most catholic of jazz-rock outfits, the only group in this genre to treat the full array of sound (from electric to acoustic) in an orchestral manner, instead of just an excuse to flash technique. Similarly, Methany strays completely clear of jazz-rock cliches to produce a lovely soaring electric guitar performance.

Leonard Cohen, the poet, has written some devastating pop lyrics on the bitter side of romance, and they're adventurously complemented with the highblown wall-of-sound of the poet-of-production, Phil Spector.

THE TOPS IN POP

Juan Rodriguez' top ten pop recordings of 1977, in no particular order:

Emmy Lou Harris — Luxury Liner (Warner Bros.)
Levon Helm & the RCO All-Stars (ABC)
Rolling Stones — Love You Live (Atlantic)
Weather Report — Heavy Weather (Columbia)
Fleetwood Mac — Rumours (Warner Bros.)
Linda Ronstadt — Simple Dreams (Asylum)
Rod Stewart — Foot Loose and Fancy Free (Warner. Bros.)
Pat Methany — Watercolors (ECM)
Leonard Cohen — Death of a Ladies Man (Columbia)

The 'tenth best' is reserved for the following honorable mentions:

Eagles — Hotel California (Asylum); Eric Clapton — Slowhand (RSO); Jesse Winchester — Nothing But A Breeze (Bearsville # Warners); Michel Pagliaro — Time Race (Columbia); Steve Miller — Book of Dreams (Capitol); The Band — Islands (Capitol); Randy Newman — Little Criminals (Warner Bros.); Steve Martin — Let's Get Small (Warner Bros.); Keith Jarrett — Staircase (ECM); Bob Marley & the Wailers — Exodus (Island).

Gazette, Garth Pritchard
Rod Stewart: He's the poet of rockers

Few brought joy to fatigued ears

By NIGHTHAWK
for The Gazette

If it wasn't for a certain journalistic tradition, you can feel quite sure that a good number of jazz reviewers wouldn't actually dwell on looking back at this waning year.

Yet, around this time we will all be reading lists of "The Best Of . . ." including jazz recordings. I will follow suit — though I wish to positively decline the arrogance that would make anyone tag their own choice **The Best.** Let's say that the following is a selection of various artists' works that brought jazzy joy to my weary ears.

Dexter Gordon — Sophisticated Giant, (Columbia)
Thelonius Monk — Brilliance, (a re-issue) (Milestone)
Dizzy Gillespie — Dizz's Party, (Pablo)
McCoy Tyner — Supertrios, (Milestone)
Ron Carter — Piccolo, (Milestone)
Stanley Cowell — Blues For The Viet-Cong, (Arista-Freedom)
Kenny Barron — Lucifer , (Muse)
Steve Kuhn & Ecstasy — Motility, (ECM)
Pat Metheny — Watercolors, (ECM)
Woody Shaw — Love Dance, (Muse)

The main delight of the above recorded works is that their musicality covers a extensive range of moods. The tunes are well written, the solos imaginative and the actual recorded product is excellent. Whether they draw from the classic roots of jazz or tend toward exploratory branching, they are honest improvised music, an exciting challenge for ears which relish the sound of surprise.

All these are qualities which, in this past year, were rare. Though there were many records available, reviewing became somewhat a pain — I plainly remember whole listening sessions where the music in the grooves was so trashy and hackneyed that I was hardly tempted to open the next record.

In 1977, attracted by a strong forward move of jazz music into popular acceptance, the record companies have busied themselves, by and large, to try and shape the music into yet another multi-million dollar consumer bonanza.

The rock listener was tantalized with electronic paraphernalia and a dull, repetitive beat — nothing more than a diluted jazzy mixture wavering between rock and disco.

For the young jazz adept, record company executives dreamed-up the 'Superband'. That meant rounding up a bunch of "names" and having them jam together on recorded sessions that often turned out to be musical disasters, with ego-tripping stylists who pulled the music in all different directions and could never fit smoothly into any common mold. The result had no substance.

Still, for the newcomers to jazz, — who seem to be quite interested in the development of the music — the record companies dished-out re-issues of 'historical' sessions, at a sickening pace. Many of the re-issues feature several versions of tunes which would have been better left in a heap of tape on the studio floor — even if they were recorded by giants.

The MOR (middle-of-the-road) market is a big temptation for the record company wizards too, and the jazz distilled for that type of listener hardly deserves to be called music. It's a mild background sound, replete with powder-puff licks, masquerading its way up the pop charts. There is a profusion of inane melodies, second-rate improvisations and lately it's topped with the syrup of string sections or female choirs. Ugh!

Where serious artists are concerned, they are fighting battles with their recording companies, changing labels, compromising to a certain extent, and looking with interest at smaller outfits that seem to give their artists more respect and creative freedom than the big multi-million dollar moguls.

In fact laurels are in order for two relatively new labels: ECM (Germany, distributed in Canada by Polydor) and Pablo (U.S., distributed in Canada by RCA).

Other independent labels such as Strata-East, Catalyst, Inner City, Xanadu and Muse are exposing talents that the big companies wouldn't gamble on, mostly musicians of a younger generation of contemporary mainstream jazz. If and when the new artists take off commercially, the big companies will step in and snap them up to add to their money-making rosters.

Though all this bitterness, mediocrity and warring is a bit discouraging, it does tend to prove that the jazz market is going through growing pains. Where there's smoke, etc . . . And the dragon of big industry wouldn't raise it's ugly head if jazz was a negligible contender for popularity.

The jazz artists are hopeful. Their concerts and club dates are well attended, they are lecturing and giving clinics and demonstrations at colleges and noticing a much larger audience for jazz.

Punk rock: No sales for the non-trend

The 'trend-of-the-year' is really a non-trend: Punk-rock.

People have been talking about the punk qualities in rock 'n' roll for over two decades, and now there is ultimate punk — a movement. Then again, pop is filled with movements, trends, fads, and many of them turn out to be bogus.

Punk is a phoney movement if only for its relative commercial value. According to a recent 'Billboard' record sales chart, only four punk albums had broken into the Top 200: Elvis Costello, hardly a punker and more of a rock 'n' roll revivalist, at No.64; the Ramones at 110; Sex Pistols at 124; and Talking Heads at 132.

It's not a particularly impressive record for a movement that has been cracked up as the biggest thing to hit pop since the Beatles.

The trouble is that folks have been looking for the 'next Beatles' ever since the Fab Four split up. There was country-rock, there was disco, now there is punk.

However, no matter what the craze, it is unlikely the Beatles. They belonged to their place and time, which is to say the Beatles came around at the right time, when pop music was in a fairly stagnant period.

Today, the rock scene is fairly stagnant — music is being made with as much mindless formula as it was in the early 1960s. But there is a big difference: Rock is a far more highly developed industry these days.

Punk is a music based on primitivism and simplicity, such as metronomic rhythms and speedy delivery and childish vocals. This does not jibe with today's listening habits, which are based on hearing complex production and variety of sound. An average consumer who has spent one or two or more thousand dollars worth of stereo equipment is not going to play music that offers so little to brain and/or body.

Similarly, because punk relies so little upon fancy lighting and sound equipment, it immediately alienates the huge industry that has been built around rock accessories.

More people make a living from the ancilliary functions of rock music than the actual stage stars themselves. Because punk, by credo, does not allow for super of sophistication and technology, the 'movement' robs these people — studio engineers, lighting experts, sound controllers, roadies — of a means of living, and that is likely something that cannot take effect: the rock industry is already too entrenched.

Punk is ultimately a live experience, best appreciated in a club or close confines for shock value — to jolt you out of your senses periodically. It will hardly come to be a staple, because the purpose of punk is electro-shock and little more. Record buyers are used to much more for the ear.

Punk may be a social phenomenon in Britain, where economic conditions and non-opportunities for youth are depressing, but people have things better in America — good stereo systems and color television sets are prevalent in all strata of American society.

Pricey stereos are designed to give clear delineations of multiple sounds. Punk does not offer that kind of variety; the range of expression, mental or aural or otherwise, is very slim in punk.

Punk-rock is great media-hype, supported by rock journalists who feel that rock's primal roots are being threatened and that punk is the salvation.

Unfortunately, punk has as much in common with others sub-genres of rock that have drifted from the roots. Instead of flaccid, as the 'cosmic' or 'sensitive' forms of rock are, it is speedy — but complacency and boredom are still prevalent. There's no room for any feeling except disatisfaction and nihilism.

The form doesn't allow for instrumental proficiency.

— Juan Rodriguez

MONTREAL FILMGOERS GUIDE

DOWNTOWN

La Cite 1 (844-3829) The World's Greatest Lover, 12:45, 2:25, 4:05, 5:50, 7:30, 9:15.
L Cite 2 Annie Hall, 1:10, 2:50, 4:30, 6:15, 7:45, 9:30.
La Cite 3 Goodbye Girl, 1, 3:05, 5:10, 7:15, 9:20.
Desjardins 1 (288-3161) La Flute Aux Six Schtroumpfs, 12:05, 1:50, (until Tuesday) Johnny S'en Va T'en Guerre, 5:25, 7:30, 9:30 (until Tuesday): Wed-Fri., 1:25, 3:25, 5:25, 7:30, 9:30.
Desjardins 2 Les 12 Travaux De Asterix, 12:35, 2:10, 3:50, (until Tues) Le Maestro, 5:35, 7:35, 9:45 (until Tues.) Wed-Fri., 12:35, 2:20, 4:10, 5:55, 7:55, 9:45.
Desjardins 3 Sans Famille, Sat-Tues., 12:15, 1:45, 3:15. More, Sat-Tues. 5:10, 7:20, 9:30. Wed.-Fri., 12:50, 3, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30.
Desjardins 4 L'Oiseau Bleu, 12:45, 1:45, 3:15, (until Tues.). Picnic A Hanging Rock, 12:40, 2:45, 4:50, 6:55, 9 (Wed.-Fri.)

Conservatory of Cinematographic Art (879-4349), Thurs.: The Doctor's Dilemma, 7, Hamlet, 9. Fri.: Marius, 7, Desire Under The Elms, 9.

Loew's 1 (861-7437) Saturday Night Fever, 12:10, 2:20, 4:35, 6:45, 9. Saturday late show at 11:15.
Loew's 2 Semi-tough, 12:55, 3, 5:05, 7:15, 9:20. Saturday late show at 11:30 p.m.
Loew's 3 Looking For Mr. Goodbar, 1:15, 3:40, 6:10, 8:45.
Loew's 4 Telefon, 12:20, 2:20, 4:25, 6:25, 8:30 Saturday late show at 10:35.
Loew's 5 Telefon, 1:20, 3:20, 5:25, 7:25, 9:30. Saturday late show at 11:35.

Outremont (277-4145/277-3881) Sun.: Le Lendemain D'La Veille . . . La Fete Continue, 1:30, 3:30, Quand La Panthere Rose S'Emmele, 7, L'Homme Qui Aimait Les Femmes, 9:30. Mon.: Same as Sunday. Tues: Le Dernier Nabab, 7, Money Money Money, 9:30. Wed.: Chauffeur De Taxi, 7, La Dentelliere, 9:30. Thurs.: Chauffer De Taxi, 7, La Dentelliere, 9:30. Fri: Yellow Submarine, 7 Les Sorciers De La Guerre (Wizards), 9:30, Fillmore, Midnight.
Palace (866-6991) Gauntlet, 1:05, 3:05, 5:05, 7:05, 9:05.
Parisein 1 Pour L'Amour De Benji, 3:10, 6:25, 9:45. Super Express, 1:20, 4:40, 8. Saturday late show: 9:45.
Parisien 2 Orca La Baleine Meurtriere, 2:15, 5:55, 9:35. La Chouette Equipe, 12:25, 4:05, 7:45. Saturday late show: 9:35.
Parisien 3 L Prof Du Bahut, 3:10, 6:25, 9:45. Black Emmanuelle, 1:30, 4:45, 8:05. Saturday late show: 9:45.
Parisien 4 Journee Particuliere, 1:20, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:35. Saturday late show 11:35.
Parisien 5 L'Animal, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9. Sat. late show: 11.

Place Ville Marie (large) (866-3666), Special Day, 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7, 9:10.
Place Ville Marie (small), Oh God, 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15.
St. Denis (849-4211) Le Rallye D'Un Amour De Coccinelle, 2:14, 5:55, 9:30. Buck Le Loup, 12:30, 4:05, 7:45.
Seville (932-1139), Today: The Three Musketeers, 5, Return Of The Pink Panther, 7, Young Frankenstein, 9. Sun: Return Of The Pink Panther, 5:15, Young Frankenstein, 7:30, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, 9:30. Mon: The Heiress, 7:15, La Grande Bourgeoise, 9:30. Tues: Cousin Cousine, 7:30, Macarthur, 9:30. Wed.: La Grande Bourgeoise, 7:15, The Music Lovers, 9:30. Thursday: What's Up Tiger Lily, 7:30, Coonskin, 9:30. Fri: One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, 6:45, New York New York, 9:15, Coonskin, midnight.
York (937-4978) World's Greatest Lover, 12:45, 2:50, 4:55, 7, 9:10.

WEST

Avenue (937-3747) Goodbye Girls, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.
Cinema V Sunday: Race For Your Life, Charlie Brown, 4, the Other Side of Midnight, 7, Black And White In Colour, 7:15, The Clowns, 9:15, The Opening Of Misty Beethoven, 9:45. Mon: The Last Remake Of Beau Geste, 7, The Adventures Of Rabbi Jacob, 7:15, The Other Side Of Midnight, 9:15, Black And White In Colour, 9:45. Tues: King Lear, 7, Black And White In Colour, 7:15 The Other Side Of Midnight, 9:15, Une Partie De Plaisir, 9:45. Wed: The Other Side Of Midnight, 7, Une Partie De Plaisir, 7:15, Women Under The Influence, 9:15, August And July, 9:45. Thurs: The Last Remake Of Beau Geste, 7, King Of Hearts, 7:15, Why Shoot The Teacher, 9:15, Two Women, 9:45. Fri: Swing Time, 7, The Seven Per Cent, 7:15, O Lucky Man, 9:15, King Of Hearts, 9:45, Led Zeppelin, midnight.
Claremont (486-7395) Looking For Mr. Goodbar, 1:15, 3:45, 6:16, 8:45.
Dervel 1 Gauntlet, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.
Dervel 2 Looking For Mr. Goodbar, 1:30, 4, 6:30, 9. Sat.-Mon. 6:30, 9.
Dervel 3 Telephon, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.
Kent (489-9707) Saturday Night Fever, 1, 3, 5, 7:10, 9:15.
Monkland (484-3579) The Pink Panther Strikes Again, 1:15, 5:15, 9:20. The Return Of The Pink Panther, 3:10, 7:15.
Snowdon (483-1322) Oh God, 1, 3, 5:05, 7:05, 9:20.
Van Horne (731-8242) Pete's Dragon, 12:30, 3, 5:30, 8.
Westmount Square (931-3477) The Turning Point, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.
Fairview 1 (697-8095) The Goodbye Girl, 12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:45, 9.
Fairview 2 Semi-Tough, 12:40, 2:45, 4:50, 7, 9:10.

EAST

Arlequin (388-2943) Today: Cousin, Cousine, 7, La Bonne Annee, 9:15. Sun.: Cousin, Cousine, 1:30, La Bonne Annee, 3:30, Cousin, Cousine, 7, La Bonne Annee, 9.
Bijou (527-9131) Une Jeune Americaine Toute Nue, 12:30, 3:35, 6:40, 9:45, Les Jeunes Secretaires, 2:10, 5:15, 8:20.
Chateau 1 (271-1183) Orca La Baleine Meurtriere, 1:25, 5:20, 9:15, La Chouette Equipe, 3:15, 7:10.
Chateau 2 L'Enfer Des Femmes, 2:50, 6, 9:15, Elsa Fraulien SS, 1:20, 4:30, 7:40.
Chevalier (845-2222) Barry Lyndon, 1:15, 5:15, 9:15, Le Casse Cou, 3:20, 7:20.
Papineau 1 (527-8635) L'Ile De Dr. Moreau, 2:30, 5:55, 9:30, L'Aventuriere De Hong Kong, 12:45, 4:15, 7:45.
Papineau 2 L'Animal, 3, 1:35, 9:15, Bon Baiser De Hong Kong, 12:15, 3:50, 7:25.
Pierrot (845-2222) Chewing Gum Rallye, 1:15, 5:15, 9:15, Le Casse Cou, 3:20, 7:20.
Rivoli 1 (277-3135) La Prof Du Bahut, 2:50, 6:10, 9:20, Black Emmanuelle, 1:10, 4:30, 7:50.
Rivoli 2 Pour L'Amour De Benji, 2:45, 6:10, 9:30, Jour De Gloire, 1, 4:20, 7:40.
Versailles 1 (352-7680) Pour L'Amour De Benji, 2:30, 6:15, 9:35, Voyage Au Bout Du Monde, 1:05, 4:25, 7:50.
Versailles 2 L'Ile Du Dr. Moreau, 2:30, 6, 9:30, Le Continent Oublie, 12:50, 4:20, 7:45.
Versailles 3 Orca La Baleine Meurtriere, 2:30, 6, 9:30, La Chouette Equipe, 12:30, 4:25, 7:40.
Vic (449-3866) Le Rallye D'Un Amour De Coccinelle, Buck Le Loup. Weekends: continous from 6. Weekdays: continous from 12:30.

Paradis 1 (353-7633) Le Rallye D'Un Amour De Coccinelle, 2:45, 6:10, 9:30, Buck Le Loup, 1, 4:20, 7:45.
Paradis 2 Le Casse Cou, 2:45, 6:10, 9:30, Chewing Gum Rallye, 1, 4:20, 7:45.
Paradis 3 La Jeune Americaine Toute Nue, 2:35, 5:30, 8:05, 10:40, Les Jeunes Secretaires, 1:15, 4, 6:50, 9:25.

NORTH

Laval 1 (688-7776) Pour L'Amour De Benji, 2:40, 6, 9:20, Voyage Au Bout Du Monde, 1:10, 4:30, 7:50. Saturday late show: 9:20.
Laval 2 Orca La Baleine Meurtriere, 2:30, 6:10, 9:15, La Chouette Equipe, 12:40, 4:15, 7:50.
Laval 3 La Prof Du Bahut, 3:05, 6:30, 9:50, Black Emmanuelle, 1:20, 4:40, 8:05. Saturday late show: 9:55.
Laval 4 L'Enfer Des Femmes, 3, 6:10, 9:25, Elsa Fraulein SS, 1:30, 4:40, 7:50. Saturday late show: 9:25.
Laval 5 L'Ile Du Dr. Moreau, 2:30, 5:55, 9:25, Le Continent Oublie, 12:50, 4:15, 7:45. Saturday late show: 9:25.

SOUTH

Greenfield Park 1 (671-6129) Pour L'Amour De Benji, 3:05, 6:25, 9:45, Impossible Pas Francais, 1:20, 4:40, 8.
Greenfield Park 2 L'Ile Du Dr. Moreau, 2:40, 6:05, 9:30, Le Continent Oublie, 1, 4:25, 7:50.
Greenfield Park 3 Orca La Baleine Meurtriere, 2:25, 6, 9:35, La Chouette Equipe, 12:30, 4:05, 7:40.
Omega 1 (463-3330) Le Rallye D'Un Amour De Coccinelle, Buck Le Loup, 1, 2:55, 4:40, 6:30.
Omega 2 Une Jeune Americaine Tout Nue, Les Jeunes Secretaires, 1, 2:55, 4:40, 6:30.

'Punkers' get visas

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The U.S. state department reversed itself yesterday and decided to allow the Sex Pistols, a controversial British rock-music group, to make a two-week visit to the United States.

On Thursday, the U.S. embassy in London had turned down a visa request because two of the four members of the group had committed criminal offences which precluded their entry into the U.S. under U.S. immigration laws, officials said.

In announcing a reversal of that decision, the state department said it has obtained waivers from the Immigration and Naturalization Service for the two members of the group who were ineligible for visas. It did not identify the two.

The department said that the waivers were obtained "because it was determined that the group sought entry into the United States for legitimate purposes."

One source said the state department, on the basis of "more complete information," decided to recommend to the Immigration and Naturalization Service that a waiver allowing the group to visit the U.S. be granted.

The reversal of the decision means that the Sex Pistols, called "the world's most notorious punk rock band" by 'Rolling Stone' magazine, will be able to carry out a 10-city concert tour next month.

Earlier, the manager of the controversial group had said in London that the band, whose spitting, swearing and violent ways have made newspaper headlines in Europe, would enter the U.S. illegally through Canada if more conventional ways were blocked.

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Art Guide
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